

Essential Catholic Social Principles and Their Impacts on Society

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Foundations of Catholic Social Thought

Religions are meant to improve the lives of society's people and provide guidelines for living peacefully. Catholic Social thought is an example. The principles of Catholic Social thought advance human beings and society, promoting humanity, respect, equality, and peace.

The principle of Catholic social thought focuses on society, but it does not forget the individual. The Catholic principles promote the common good as opposed to individual capitalist endeavors. It distinguishes between the self and the community, but the community and the common good have greater significance than the individual or self. However, it does recognize the significance of individuals and their virtues in building a community with better facilities and understanding. The paper discusses four Catholic Social principles, the dignity of the human person, the common good, the preferential option for the poor, and the promotion of peace, to illustrate that the principles of CST promote peace, prosperity, and unity in society. (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, n.d.)

The dignity of human person principle states human beings have value regardless of their social or economic status. They are important because they are human beings, and they do not require anything else to be respected. The person is worthy intrinsically, and it must not be treated as a means to achieve something else. Humans must not be disrespected. They have dignity, which must not be taken from them, and this dignity applies to every human being. Therefore, any act that disrespects a human person is immoral. For instance, slavery or abortion is wrong because it takes away the dignity and life of the person. Abortion treats human life as unworthy and as a means to achieve personal benefits. However, the Catholic principles do not agree with such a treatment of the human person. It emphasizes that every human person has an intrinsic value regardless of reasons or external factors. Therefore, the Catholic principle promotes and advances human dignity. It discourages any or every act of violation of human rights or disrespect and mistreatment. As the person lives in society with other people, human dignity is established in reference to society. The dignity of the person becomes communal, as people cannot live in isolation. Moreover, it follows the principle of Ubuntu, which recognizes and respects duties and responsibilities. Society supports the individual, and the individual supports the society. There is no other way for a human being to live in a society. It advocates for respecting everyone in the society where the individual lives. Although the principle focuses on the inalienable rights of every human person, it also focuses on the community. As the person lives in the community, the person must live with some responsibilities and duties for

the community to be peaceful and grow. The individual flourishes and then helps society to flourish. Individual advancement promotes society's advancement at the community, national, and global levels, leading to order, peace, and harmony.

Principle of the Common Good

The second principle is the principle of the common good. As a human being is a social being, a person cannot live alone in society. Therefore, the person has to live with others, and living in a society, they must focus on the common good. They must contribute to growing society as a whole. The principle focuses on the common good of everyone in the society regardless of their social, economic, political, and religious status. The principle is crucial for building equality and harmony in society. Consequently, the principle encourages all individuals to contribute to advance society and the common good. Individuals must work for the common good that benefits everyone in society. For example, contributing to building a public gym can be considered a common good. As it serves everyone in society, it establishes the common good. Similarly, a public park can be another example of a common good that assists everyone and contributes to the well-being of everyone instead of serving a single group. Therefore, the common good is essential to Catholic social thought, which focuses on the well-being of everyone in society. (Leo XIII, 1891) It discourages disparities and individual endeavors. If an act by an individual does not advance the betterment of everyone in society, that action must not be promoted. Individual advancement is only praiseworthy if it advances society and the common good. An individual lives in society, and the person must contribute to advancing society and benefiting from society. The individual and society are essential to each other, and they cannot exist without one, so they must contribute to flourishing each other.

Preferential Option for the Poor

The third principle of Catholic Social thought is the preferential option for the poor. The preferential option for the poor is the principle that focuses on the poor people. It argues that the poor in society must be treated differently so that their social, economic, and political status will change. The marginalized groups or the minorities in society must be given importance, and they must be helped to change their lives. The vulnerable groups must be given a voice and proper rights to advance their conditions and have better lives in society. Catholic social thought discourages discrimination and focuses on a just and equal society, which is why they work for the improvement of the lives of poor people. It is the recognition of the detrimental impacts of poverty on society and the groups that the CST focuses on treating them preferentially, improving their conditions, and bringing them out of poverty. Otherwise, the evils of poverty will affect them for generations. Society will treat them unjustly, and they will be left out of education, healthcare, and political and social participation. The poor people present a negative image of society. They also negatively reflect on the ethics and virtues of human beings. Therefore, society must work to improve the conditions of the poor as virtuous and rational human beings. The injustices must be recognized and abolished from society for

society to function properly.

Promotion of Peace and Social Responsibility

The last principle is the promotion of peace. Peace is essential for every society to flourish. The lack of peace and harmony negatively impacts society's growth and well-being as well as the well-being of individuals. Peace is necessary for humanity and to maintain human dignity. It is necessary to advance the common good, elevation poverty, and build a just and equal society. Without peace, all aspects of individual and societal life are affected. Therefore, CST promotes peace to achieve the ultimate goal of a just society where the common good is the priority. And every individual must contribute to it. They must contribute to promoting peace by building virtues of tolerance and acceptance in the self and helping others in society to promote peace as well.

To conclude, Catholic Social thought focuses on promoting a peaceful and equal society. The principles of CST try to minimize selfishness in humans by advancing the common good and human dignity, abolishing poverty, and promoting peace.

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